

NH Dredge Management Task Force

Meeting Minutes – March 26, 2008

The meeting was held on Wednesday, March 26, 2008 from 1:30 PM to 3:00 PM at the Department of Environmental Services (DES)/New Hampshire Coastal Program (NHCP) Office, 50 International Drive, Pease Tradeport, Portsmouth, NH.

Introductions/Announcements– Chairman Chris Williams asked members to introduce themselves. The list of attendees follows:

Members:

Steve Bird, City of Dover
Sheridan Brown, Office of Senator Sununu
Tom Dobbins, Sprague Energy
Norm Farris, ACOE
Caroline Ganley, Office of Congresswoman Shea-Porter
Olga Guza, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Richard Holt, Moran Towing
Pat Kelley, Wentworth Marina and Ports and Harbors Advisory Committee
Ryan McCarthy, ENSR
Eric Nestler, Normandeau Associates
Cheri Patterson, NH Fish & Game Department (NHF&G)
Dean Peschel, City of Dover
Tracy Shattuck, Pease Development Authority, Division of Ports & Harbors (PDA-DPH)
Fred Short, UNH, Jackson Estuarine Lab
Mike Walsh, Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)

Staff:

Chris Williams, Chairman, NH Coastal Program (NHCP)
Mary Power, NHCP

Minutes from previous meeting - Chairman Williams asked if there were any comments on the minutes from the meeting of January 9, 2008. Hearing no comment, the minutes were approved as written and will be posted on the Dredge Management Task Force (DMTF) web page at <http://des.nh.gov/Coastal/dmtf.htm>.

Legislative Update - Chair asked if there is anything new from the Congressional delegation. Sheridan Brown (Senator Sununu) said there is nothing new and that the Senator's internal deadline for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 appropriations requests has just passed. Congresswoman Carolyn Shea-Porter (Caroline Ganley) stated that she did not have anything new to report.

FY09 Projects and Priorities - Chairman stated that staff from the NHCP, the PDA-DPH, the ACOE and the Congressional delegation met in mid-February to discuss the state's FY 2009 priorities regarding dredging projects. Based on the discussion, the state's top four priority projects for FY 2009 are as follows:

1. *Regional Dredge Material Management Plan* - For those dredge materials that are clean but not suitable for beach nourishment or in-river or near-shore disposal, there are only two practicable modes of disposal: offshore and onshore. New Hampshire's primary offshore disposal site, the Cape Arundel disposal site (CADS), is scheduled to close in January 2010, and the state does not have a designated onshore disposal site. The Regional Dredge Material Management Plan (DMMP) is comprised of two components: a) an Offshore Dredge Material Site Designation Study; and b) Phase II of the NH Comprehensive Upland Dredge Material Disposal Study. The state requested \$100,000 for scoping for an environmental impact statement to formally designate CADS and consider alternative offshore sites, and \$159,000 to complete phase II of the Comprehensive Upland Dredge Material Disposal Study.
2. *Hampton Harbor Section 107 Feasibility Study and Maintenance Dredging* - The state requested \$1.6M for construction of the inner harbor improvements as well as an additional \$130,000 for maintenance of the inlet channel.
3. *Piscataqua River Navigation Improvement (Turning Basin) Feasibility Study* - State requested \$82,000 for completion of the feasibility study.
4. *Sagamore Creek Maintenance Dredging* - The state requested \$150,000 to complete environmental assessment and coordination.

Chairman Williams stated that appropriation request letters, signed by the PDA-DPH and NHCP, were submitted to each member of the Congressional delegation in late February. He also stated that he is hopeful that funding will be provided for the above-referenced projects. Tom Dobbins (Sprague Energy) asked when the proposed improvements to the Piscataqua River Turning Basin would occur. Chair stated that construction would likely begin in 2010-2011 or later. Chair continued by stating that he will be meeting with the Maine dredging team next month to discuss the Piscataqua River Turning Basin project and CADS because both projects are bordered and partially located in Maine state waters.

Project Updates

• **Hampton Section 107 Feasibility Study Report & Future of Half-Tide Jetty** – Mike Walsh (ACOE) read a prepared statement by Project Manager Dick Heidebrecht (ACOE) summarizing the current status of the project. Per the statement, the ACOE is proceeding with the draft feasibility report, which it is targeting for completion by the end of spring. The Hampton Harbor Hydrodynamic Study prepared by UNH in 2002 does not address the half-tide jetty. It focuses on the previously proposed three-quarter tide jetty. A recent meeting between ACOE staff, including staff from the Regulatory Branch, determined that an ACOE permit would not be required to repair/reconstruct the half-tide jetty if it is constructed within the previously authorized dimensions and in the same location. Any relocation or reconfiguration of the jetty would require an ACOE permit. Chair reminded members that because of the state's historic obligation to maintain the half-tide jetty, the ACOE will likely require the state to perform improvements to the jetty as part of the Hampton Harbor Navigation Improvement project.

• **Sagamore Creek Maintenance Dredging** – Mike Walsh (ACOE) stated that he is awaiting a decision from the ACOE's Biological Evaluation Branch regarding the placement of dredge material at the near-shore disposal area off Wallis Sands Beach. Because the material dredged from Little Harbor in 2000/2001 was placed offshore of Wallis Sands Beach, the ACOE would like to use the same benthic sampling report that was prepared for the Little Harbor project. This would save the ACOE time and money associated with preparing a new benthic sampling report for the Sagamore Creek project. Walsh stated that the nature of the

material to be dredged from Sagamore Creek is similar to that dredged from Little Harbor. He also stated that he assumes that the habitat and benthic community that currently exists at the near-shore disposal site is essentially identical to that which existed when the Little Harbor sampling report was prepared. If the Biological Evaluation Branch determines that additional sampling is required, it will be conducted in late spring or early summer. If additional sampling is not required, Walsh will begin the process of environmental coordination with state and federal resource agencies. Norm Farris (ACOE) stated that the U.S. Coast Guard had an evaluation done of the disposal site off Wallis Sands a few years ago. He stated that he'd send information regarding the evaluation to Walsh. Richard Holt (Moran Towing) asked when Sagamore Creek would likely be dredged. Walsh stated that sufficient funding must first be made available in FY 2009 to complete environmental assessment and coordination, and to finalize plans and specifications. If this occurs, dredging could begin in November 2010, if funding for construction is made available in early 2010.

Piscataqua River Turning Basin Feasibility Study - Mike Walsh (ACOE) read a prepared statement by Project Manager Dick Heidebrecht (ACOE) summarizing the current status of the project. Per the statement, the ACOE has received \$148,000 in matching non-federal funds from the PDA-DPH to continue the feasibility study. Contracts for marine geophysics and marine archeology have been modified to include new survey and boring data. The ACOE anticipates receipt of the draft geophysical and archaeological reports in late April. The ACOE acknowledges the need to meet with Fred Short (UNH) regarding the presence of eelgrass. Chair asked about the location of known eelgrass beds in or near the work area. Short stated that there are some eelgrass beds on the Maine side of the river across from the proposed work area. Discussion followed regarding the amount of ledge to be removed and the need for blasting. Based on recent boring data, the amount of ledge to be blasted and removed has been significantly reduced.

Cocheco River Maintenance Dredge - Walsh (ACOE) stated that the ACOE received \$2.8 million for the project in FY 2008. An additional \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million is needed, however, to complete dredging and fully pay the disposal fees to the City of Dover. Last week the ACOE met with the City of Dover and the Congressional delegation to discuss how to proceed with the \$2.8 million under the current funding climate. A decision was made, at the request of the City of Dover, to utilize the \$2.8 million to pay the remaining balance of the disposal fees to date, approximately \$900,000, and to partially dredge below the lower narrows. The ACOE estimates that approximately 14,500 yd³ of material remains to be dredged to complete the project. The money that remains after the disposal fees are paid, ± \$1.9 million, will enable the ACOE to remove only approximately 7,500 yd³ of material and pay for its disposal. Walsh stated that the ACOE will focus its dredging efforts on those shallow areas below the lower narrows at a depth of 5 feet or less. Walsh is also considering having the contractor remove the pinnacles of some of the rock outcroppings that remain in areas that were previously dredged. This would involve hammering them with a ho-ram, and would take approximately five days to complete. The actual removal of the bedrock material would occur during the dredge window. He hopes to be able to begin this work at the beginning of November 2008, prior to the commencement of the dredge window on November 15th. Cheri Patterson (NHF&G) stated that she doesn't see a problem with conducting the ramming work a week before the dredge window, but she requested that Walsh submit all the necessary details to her via email, to which she would respond. Walsh agreed. Walsh stated that once the aforementioned 7,500 yd³ material and the rock pinnacles are removed, the project would be deemed complete.

Discussion followed. Chair asked Walsh if he anticipates needing an extension of the dredge window in March 2009. Walsh stated that although he doesn't anticipate needing an extension, it may be necessary depending on the weather. He is going to recommend that the contractor halt dredging activities when ice is

present. He believes there will be approximately a month and a half of non-ice conditions at the beginning of the dredge window (Nov. 15 – Dec. 31) and a few weeks at the end of the dredge window (March 1 – 15). Patterson (NHF&G) stated that, as with previous extensions, any extension in March 2009 would be temperature dependant. She continued by suggesting that Walsh reference the possibility of a March 2009 extension in his email to her, and also acknowledge that any extension will be temperature dependent. Walsh stated that he hopes to get the same contractor as last year because of the contractor's experience and familiarity with the river. Chairman asked if modifications to the Wetlands Bureau permit would be necessary. Walsh stated that the permit has already received a five-year extension and that additional permit modifications would not be necessary.

Other Business

Cape Arundel Disposal Site - Chairman had previously spoken about this item and restated that he will be meeting with the Maine Dredging Team next month to discuss coordination for the Cape Arundel disposal site and the Piscataqua River Turning Basin project. Chairman stated that he'd give a report at the next DMTF meeting.

Simplex Shoal, Piscataqua River – Chairman stated that NHF&G is awaiting some historic survey data regarding this project. Since the ACOE project representative (Ed O'Donnell) was not in attendance Chairman stated that he'd contact Mr. O'Donnell regarding this issue. At the last DMTF the issue of in-river disposal was discussed at length and it was suggested that the state work with the ACOE to establish a memorandum of agreement regarding future dredging and dredge material disposal issues. Chairman stated that in response to the discussion at the last meeting, he requested that the ACOE provide him with a one-page summary of the Simplex Shoal project, including dredge disposal alternatives, so that he can pass it along to upper management at DES and NHF&G. He said he is awaiting this information. Cheri Patterson (NHF&G) stated that while NHF&G is not opposed to dredging the shoal, it does have concerns with in-river disposal of the dredge material. Discussion followed. Richard Holt (Moran Towing) stated that he thought that when the shoal was last dredged in 2000, it was dredged deeper than the required federal channel depth as a means of advanced maintenance. He asked if this could be done again. Walsh (ACOE) stated that because of concerns by resource agencies, including EPA and NMFS, the practice of advanced maintenance requires approval from the Corps' Division office. Olga Guza (EPA) stated that overdepth dredging is a hot topic among certain federal resource agencies. Chair agreed to raise this issue with Ed O'Donnell (ACOE) when he speaks with him. Discussion followed.

Little Harbor & Rye Harbor Hydrographic Condition Surveys - Chairman Williams stated that he had no new information and hoped that Ed O'Donnell (ACOE) could provide the details regarding the status of the surveys at the next meeting.

Other items – Chairman asked members if they had anything else to discuss. Norm Farris (ACOE) introduced himself to members. He stated that he's from the Policy Branch of Regulatory Division of the ACOE and is working with a new nationwide initiative to replace the dredge material inspector program with an automated system. Currently dredging projects with open-water or near-shore disposal require an inspector on-board the disposal vessel to monitor disposal activities. The applicant is responsible for paying for the on-board inspector. The automated system will use sensors to collect information that will be transferred via satellite to the ACOE's Office in Mobile Alabama, thereby eliminating the need for on-board

inspectors. The information gathered will be able to be easily shared among agencies. While the up-front costs associated with installing the automated equipment are expected to be high, the long-term costs will be cheaper than the current inspector program. He continued by stating that the ACOE will be offering regional training sessions in late spring or early summer for dredging contractors in New England. The ACOE plans to have the new automated system up and running by January 2009. Discussion followed regarding the expense of the new system. Walsh (ACOE) stated that small contractors who do the minor dredging projects will not be able to afford the new automated systems. Farris stated that the ACOE will purchase the software needed to run the system but contractors will be responsible for purchasing the hardware. Chair asked whether there is a public outreach component for this program. Farris said that there will be opportunities for public comment on this new initiative. Chairman encouraged Mr. Farris to notify him so that information can be posted on the DMTF web site. Discussion followed.

Richard Holt (Moran Towing) stated that Granite State Minerals (GSM) has purchased the former Mobil Tank Farm property along the Piscataqua River in Newington. The gas/oil tanks have been removed and GSM is looking for fill material for the site. Walsh (ACOE) stated that the property should be placed on the list of possible sites identified in the Comprehensive Upland Dredge Material Disposal Study. Chairman stated that he'd contact GSM.

Olga Guza (EPA) informed the members of a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) conference on April 8, 9, and 10 in Chelmsford, MA. She then asked if New Hampshire and Maine are creating a combined Special Area Management Plan. Chairman stated that New Hampshire and Maine are pursuing more of a regional dredge material management plan to include offshore and upland disposal.

Chairman asked if members would prefer to have meeting information (i.e., agendas, minutes, presentations) sent as attachments to emails or if they'd prefer to go to the DMTF web page to obtain this information. Members voted unanimously to continue with the current method of attachments to emails.

Schedule next DMTF meeting – The next meeting was scheduled for **Wednesday June 25th at 1:30 at the DES/NHCP Pease Office in Portsmouth.**

Eelgrass Presentation by Fred Short (UNH) - Dr. Fred Short of UNH gave a presentation entitled "Eelgrass & Human Impacts." The presentation will be posted on the DMTF web page at: <http://des.nh.gov/Coastal/dmtf.htm>.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM